

Frequently Asked Questions about School-Based Flu Clinics

This document is not meant to take the place of guidance, health alerts, or advisories that are posted on the Maine CDC web site at www.maineclu.gov. The questions and answers that appear below offer clarification in response to common questions that have been expressed in response to these communications from Maine CDC. This document will be updated periodically as we learn of questions that are being repeatedly asked by those participating in the school-based flu clinic initiative.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Health Alert Network: Sign up to receive urgent updates from Maine CDC's Health Alert Network (HAN). The easiest and quickest way is to sign up is through the HAN Alert RSS feed at www.mainecluhealth.gov (midway down the center of the homepage).

Follow Maine CDC's Updates:

- Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/MaineCDC>)
- Twitter (<http://twitter.com/MEPublicHealth>)
- MySpace (www.myspace.com/mainecluhealth)
- Maine CDC's Blog (<http://mainecluhealth.blogspot.com>)

Consider Calling or Emailing Us:

- For clinical consultation, outbreak management guidance, and reporting of an outbreak of H1N1 call Maine CDC's toll free 24-hour phone line at: 1-800-821-5821.
- Call 211 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week with general questions
- Email your questions to: flu.questions@maine.gov

U.S. CDC H1N1 Recommendations and Guidance:

www.cdc.gov/flu, www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu, www.flu.gov

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Vaccine Clinics: General Provider Questions

I am already an MIP provider. Do I still need to register as a vaccine provider for the coming flu season?

No. MIP providers that have a standard 4-digit PIN need not register for a new one.

I became an MIP provider to receive H1N1 vaccine. Do I need to register again for the coming flu season?

Yes. H1N1 PINs were established for one-time distribution of the H1N1 vaccine. These were 3-digit PINs. Distribution of seasonal influenza vaccine will require the standard MIP 4-digit PIN.

I have sent in my Provider agreement and requested a certain number of doses. Can I change my order?

The provider agreement asks for some estimates on age groups, but it is not the order form. The order form will be sent to you by May 15 and is due back by May 31.

We will be ordering for school districts, PCP offices, and our hospital. Can all of that be under the same MIP PIN?

You may place all of your orders using the same PIN – just note that all orders placed under a PIN are shipped to the same place. If you do not want to redistribute the vaccine you may have it directly shipped to other locations, by applying for additional PINs.

Who should I contact with questions or for more information?

Please send questions or feedback to: flu.questions@maine.gov.

Vaccine Clinics: Questions from Schools and Others Participating in School-based Clinics

Are we required to participate in school-based vaccine clinics?

Participation in school-based vaccine clinics is voluntary. If there are certain barriers to your participation, we would like to know so that we can do our best to address all issues.

In 2009-2010 our school received vaccine from a cooperating vaccine provider, and did not register to be an MIP provider. Can we do the same thing this year?

Maine CDC encourages schools or school districts to become vaccine providers where feasible. However, if you do not have the ability, you may partner with a healthcare provider to access vaccine.

What about the liability concerns that were raised by some schools?

We recognize that some schools expressed concerns about liability issues for children receiving vaccine in the school setting. These concerns were addressed this past fall in the Governor's Emergency Declaration. We are committed to continuing to address these liability concerns.

Our school would like to receive vaccine directly from MIP. What do we need to do?

Register to become an MIP provider. Vaccine provider enrollment forms are available at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/immunization/providers/forms-updates.shtml>. Requirements for becoming a vaccine provider include having appropriate training and refrigeration. Please note that this enrollment form is the same form that is used for enrolling physician offices as MIP providers. Because not all parts of the form pertain to schools, some sections of the enrollment form can be skipped by schools – a letter and instructions about how to fill out the agreement for school settings will be sent out by the mid- to late-May.

We missed the April 30 deadline to sign up as a provider. Is it too late to participate in school-based clinics next fall?

No. Schools that wish to participate in school-based clinics in the fall need to register and submit an order before school adjourns for the summer.

What kind of funding is available for this initiative?

At this point in time, we do not anticipate being able to assist with funding for vaccine administration. However, we anticipate insurance reimbursement for vaccine administration will be available, and we are working on improving the ease and access to this funding source for the fall. We also will be able to provide some funds for school-located vaccine clinic infrastructure this spring, such as refrigeration.

Will you be supplying syringes and needles?

The vaccine for school-based clinics will come in pre-filled syringes. Needle tips are required for these syringes, and we are currently developing a system to ship these needle tips separately to schools that request them. Schools may also order nasal spray vaccine.

We do not have a back-up generator, does this mean we can't be an MIP provider?

A back-up generator is not a requirement to become an MIP provider. You need to have a plan for maintaining the cold chain for the vaccine if you lose power. MIP will provide information about vaccine storage and handling in training sessions.

We cannot have staff coming in on weekends and school vacations to monitor the temperature in the refrigerators. Does this mean we can't be an MIP provider?

Logging the refrigerator temperature two times a day is required as long as the school or office is open, but you are not required to come in on weekends and vacations.

Guidance for Flu Season

What is the current guidance for schools?

Maine CDC expects that most schools in the state will eventually have some cases of the flu. Below are some tips for preventing and responding to the flu.

- Host school-based vaccine clinics.
- Stay home when sick
- Separate ill students and staff: Both students and staff that come to school with flu-like illness, or develop symptoms during the day, will be sent to a separate room until they can be sent home. They will be asked to wear a surgical mask if possible, and those caring for them will also wear masks in order to reduce the spread of infection.
- Report elevated absenteeism or school closure due to illness. Please report absenteeism greater than or equal to 15% to Maine CDC by one of these methods:
 - Call 1-800-821-5821 or
 - E-mail disease.reporting@maine.gov or
 - Fax 1-800-293-7534
- Don't get, don't spread the flu: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).
- Routine cleaning: School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. CDC does not believe any additional disinfection of environmental surfaces beyond the recommended routine cleaning is required.
- Consider selective school dismissal: Maine CDC and Department of Education are not issuing directives to close schools at this time. The goal of both state agencies is to keep schools open and functioning as usual, whenever possible. On a case-by-case basis, some schools may need to consider closing, based on:
 - Absenteeism that is substantially higher than expected for the facility at this time of year
 - Confirmation that the absenteeism is due to influenza-like-illness
 - Indication that the already high absenteeism is rising rather than falling
 - Inability to function due to high absenteeism among students and/or staff

School administrators with questions about reporting increased absenteeism, precautions to take, or the ways in which to notify parents about cases of flu in the school, should contact Maine CDC's Clinical Consultation line at 1-800-821-5821 or e-mail disease.reporting@maine.gov.